



INVITATION

The War Archive will be hosting on

**Friday 4 April at 7.30 pm a presentation on
Popular Songs during the War, Occupation and Civil War**

The presentation will be in Greek and will be based not so much on images but on the songs themselves and on sound archival material

Presenter : Nikos Mitrogiannopoulos

Research and documentation: Giorgos Athitakis and Nikos Mitrogiannopoulos

Popular songs and War

The War Archive had always planned to present topics on war in general, but not exclusively on battles, arms of war and war-related personalities. The War Archive believes that war can be defined also as “societies under extreme pressure and duress” and hence the reactions in these societies to different activities, including the arts, has been an important topic reflected also in our collection of books and of videos on the topic of “arts during the war”

We need to make a linguistic distinction here before introducing the topic of this presentation. In modern Greek the expression “popular songs” has a very specific meaning. It does not necessarily mean “popular” in the sense of popularity and wide appeal, but it means songs appealing to and deriving from the lower economic and social strata. The “rebetika” songs are per excellence a good example of “popular songs” which can easily fall under both classifications, of having wide appeal, large record sales etc and also deriving from composers and artists with a special social background. To confuse the matter further, in modern Greek the

expression “Demotic songs” refer exclusively to the songs of the countryside, of peasant farmers, shepherds and in, general, non-urban dwellers.

The topic of our presentation is, therefore, focused mostly, but not only, on the “rebetika” type of songs of the urban poor.

It now follows that the role of “popular songs” during WWII in Greece in general, and in Athens in particular, and also during the period which followed the Occupation-the civil war- are of key importance in our effort to illustrate aspects of war other than combat, and through the experiences of the common people under extreme pressures.

Despite the fact that the soundtrack, so to speak, of the Greek-Italian war was dominated by light and romantic songs, especially those of the singer Sofia Vembo, the “popular songs” also made a claim in recording the feelings and daily experiences of that period, a kind of sound rather than film documentary.

This presentation is dedicated to the “popular songs” which were composed during the war and in the troubled period right after it and to their composers who, during a critical time, stood by the common people despite the fact that they themselves faced a peculiar form of discrimination and marginalization. The composers of these “popular songs”, to the extent that they could tap in what we may call the collective subconscious, could summarize the social experience in the three minutes of the recorded melodies. Their verses cover the war observed from below looking up, and by those who fought and returned victors and defeated at the same time, and alive but also wounded. These songs are the expression of these particular social strata at that particular time and not of an effort imposed from above with uncertain aims and equally uncertain results.

Similar topics which the Archeion plans to present in the near future and along the same lines of issues of “culture under duress” include the activities of cinema, theatre, classical music and opera in occupied Athens, children’s toys during the war and, finally, the war through the eyes of children based on the large collection of ELIA of children’s drawing and cartoons made during the war.

We look forward to your presence in a presentation with few images and photos but with a lot more music !

Nikos Mitrogiannopoulos was born in 1966 in Athens and studied classical philology at Athens University and Cinema Direction at the school of Lykourgos Staurakos. He worked on both these areas. In 2002 he founded the Archive of Audiovisual Material “Of the Anonymous” with key aim to collect, save and use amateur films. He has worked for ELIA and also for the War Archive since its inception. His articles and essays have been published by journals and magazines such as Antikinimatografos, Kathreptis, Laiko Tragoudi and Metronomos

Giorgios Athitakis was born 22 years after the end of the Greek-Italian war on 28 October 1962 at Chania, Crete. He worked as head of sales in big record shops in Athens and as advisor on editions of record collections. He is a researcher of Greek songs and also collects records of that particular repertory but especially of “popular songs”. Articles of his on the topic have been published in various magazines.

The Arheion is looking very much forward to your presence in this event.
We ask you however to let us know whether you will be coming either by replying to this email at afreris@wararchivegr.org and/or by contacting Maka Dokhnadze at the phone of the Arheion, 210-8676390 ,or mobile phone 69-98088220 by latest Monday 31March 2014 as our space is limited.

Andrew Freris